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Getting new staff to stay: The mediating role of organizational identification

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Getting new staff to stay: The mediating role of organizational identification

Newcomer turnover is a major cost to organizations, and the quality of new employees' experiences in the first few months is critical in determining whether they decide to stay or leave. In a study that focused on the first stage of newcomer socialization, we investigate the impact of perceptions of social validation from the team and the team leader, and perceived fairness of treatment on newcomers' identification with their work team and the organization, specifically measuring the group self-investment components of identification. The mediating role of these levels of group self-investment and of the imbalance (i.e., difference) between levels of self-investment on turnover intentions was also tested. New staff ($N=569$) joining a large public-sector organization completed a questionnaire about their socialization experiences in their first 6 months of their employment. Structural equation modeling revealed that social validation by the team and team leaders, and fairness of treatment, predict increased investment with the organization and with the team. Organizational-level self-investment and an imbalance in favor of investment with the organization over that of the team mediated decreases in turnover intentions. We conclude that organizations should provide newcomers with validation that promotes identification with their organization during this critical stage of socialization.

Key words: Social identity, organizational identity, identification, socialization, newcomers, social validation, procedural justice

Word count: 7, 998

Getting new staff to stay: The mediating role of organizational identification

In the first few months of employment, what makes one new employee want to remain with an organization, and another to resign? Dating back to the early 1970s, researchers have found that when an individual identifies with a social group, they become more committed to the group and they are less likely to leave of their own volition (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; van Vugt & Hart, 2004). However, research is yet to identify the psychological processes that lead an individual to identify with their new organization in these early stages of their employment, and so makes them more committed to stay. Moreover, untangling these psychological processes is complicated by evidence that employees display multiple levels of identification, for example with their work team and with their organization (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). Furthermore, identification is a multi-dimensional construct with several sub-components, some of which may be more significant to newcomer identity development than others (e.g., Leach, van Zomeren, Zebel, Vliek, Ouerkerk, & Spears, 2008).

Recently, the *British Journal of Management* called for a more integrated understanding of social and organizational identity (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007), and has published studies into, for example, identity matching (Ullrich, Wieseke, Christ, Schulze, & van Dick, 2007) and nested identities and motivation (Riketta & Nienaber, 2007). Despite these theoretical advances, there is a lack of empirical data on (a) the social-psychological perceptions that facilitate individuals' identification concurrently at different levels (e.g., with their work team and their organization) (b) the impact of an imbalance between identification at these levels on employee commitment, and (c) which sub-component(s) of identification are most important in predicting this continued commitment.

For organizations, it is important to understand the factors that shape employee commitment given the considerable financial, social and productivity costs associated with the high turn-over of newcomers (e.g., Abelson & Baysinger, 1984; Dess & Shaw, 2001). A new employee's first 3 to 6 months is generally considered the highest period of risk in terms of turnover. Up to half of staff turnover occurs within the first 6 months of employment. The costs of turnover range from 1/2 to 5 times an employee's annual wages dependent upon the position. Severance pay is also a major cost especially among more highly skilled employees and middle to executive management. In addition, turnover impacts upon sales, performance and profit (Kacmar, Andrews, van Rooy, Steilberg & Cerrone, 2006).

The socialization programs used by organizations are often centralized (e.g., Allen, 2006; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Morrison, 1993), and therefore we know relatively little about the role of the day-to-day interactions of new employees with their existing teams and team leaders in building the commitment to stay. Focusing on the factors that can promote the development of identification at the more local level will provide insight into practical solutions that employers can use at this level to ease the transition phase for both the organization and new employees. In particular, we examine the role of two key factors stemming from this local level: perceptions of social validation and fairness of treatment. We argue that these two fundamental social-psychological factors help to attach a newcomer to an organization because they provide newcomers with the vital cues from their co-workers that they are normative, respected and accepted ingroup members (Ashforth et al., 2008; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Festinger, 1950, 1954; Restubog, Hornsey, Bordia, & Esposito, 2008; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Walumbwa, Cropanzano, & Hartnell, 2009).

While fairness of treatment is a well-established variable in studies of employee retention (Walumbwa et al., 2009), the role of social validation either by work team members or the team leader are less well understood conceptually or tested empirically. We propose

that the levels of identification in turn mediate the relationship between social validation, fairness and reduced turnover intentions. In particular, a conceptual development from this research is that sense-giving through social validation contributes to the development of identity (Ashforth et al., 2008; Weick, 1995). In the following sections, we articulate more fully the guiding conceptual framework and hypotheses (see Figure 1).

Integrating social and organizational identity

The role of social identity. Recent discussions have called for a more integrated approach to the study of social and organizational identity (Ashforth et al., 2008; Cornelissen et al., 2007), including the processes by which identities at different levels of abstraction relate to each other (Riketta & Nienaber, 2007; Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). According to social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), identification is a multi-dimensional, psychological connection to a group with both emotional and cognitive significance (Cameron, 2004; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999; Leach et al., 2008). The emotional aspect of identification is labeled “group-level self-investment” and the cognitive component is “group-level self-definition”. Once an individual becomes identified with a group, he or she may also develop a commitment to the group and internalize its goals, culture, norms and values. If a particular social identity is salient to individuals, they interpret and react to social stimuli in terms of that identity (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987).

Group-level self-investment, as the more affective dimension of identification, has been especially related to maintaining a positive evaluation of the in-group (for a review, see Ashmore et al., 2004). Previous authors have suggested that this may be of primary importance in determining the strategies a newcomer uses to maintain a positive self-image, for example by remaining with or leaving their group (Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008).

Therefore, in the current research we focused on the group-level self-investment subcomponents of identification.

The development of identification. Newcomers are unlikely to begin their jobs with a fully developed sense of identification with their new organization (see Amiot, de la Sablonnière, Terry, & Smith, 2007). In a recent conceptual framework, Amiot et al. (2007) propose that newcomers experience social identity development as a series of distinct phases over time. New identities are integrated into the self-concept and organized within the global self-structure (Amiot et al., 2007). As employees experience these phases, they will react to the new organization in specific ways. Once the new work identity is fully integrated into the self, this identity contributes to the individual's sense of self, independent of the social context. This framework highlights the significance of the initial stages of socialization, in line with evidence of high levels of turnover among new staff at this stage. Employees in the first 6 months are at a period in the socialization process described in the Amiot et al. (2007) framework as between the “categorization” and “compartmentalization” stages of identity integration. Newcomers may still identify with their previous organization, but are beginning to recognize their new organizational identity. They are yet to fully integrate the new identity into the self. Individuals are in the process of gathering information about their status in their new ingroup. Therefore, social feedback from existing ingroup members in the forms of fair treatment and social validation are particularly important at this stage of socialization in promoting newcomers' development of group-level self-investment and feelings of acceptance.

In order to understand the process by which newcomers “learn the ropes” at this first stage of socialization (e.g., Jokisaari & Nurmi, 2009) and “make the transition from being organizational outsiders to being insiders” (Bauer, Bodner, Tucker, Erdogan, & Truxillo, 2007, p. 707; for reviews see e.g., Ashforth, Sluss, & Harrison, 2007; Bauer & Taylor, 2001;

Wanous & Colella, 1989), theorists generally focus on the ways in which organizations facilitate socialization (e.g., by socialization tactics) and/or ways in which the individual masters their role (e.g., Allen, 2006; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Morrison, 1993). This focus neglects the social-psychological processes that occur concurrently, including the possibility that if an individual builds self-investment with their organization, this provides the psychological “glue” (van Vugt & Hart, 2004) that could bind together the socialization processes and tactics described above.

In addition, researchers have focused on the judgments of individual newcomers about the organization’s relative distinctiveness or his or her personal reasons for becoming attached to their organization (e.g., Eisenbeiss & Otten, 2008; for a review, see Ashforth et al., 2008). However, this focus promotes an under-emphasis on the more informal process of building identities through for example, social feedback from group members (cf. Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005).

The role of social validation in increasing newcomer group-level self-investment.

The successful adaptation of newcomers in a work environment depends partly on them mastering their role (e.g., Ashforth & Saks, 1996). This mastery is aided by positive and reinforcing feedback from both co-workers and more senior colleagues about the appropriateness or “validity” of their workplace actions (Ibarra, 1999). From a social identity perspective, there are many reasons why we might expect that positive and validating feedback from leaders can shape newcomers’ group-level self-investment. For example, leaders are more effective in engendering followership when they affirm a salient identity (Haslam & Platow, 2001). Vertical communication of this kind has been shown to predict organisational identification (Bartels, Peters, de Jong, Pruyn, & van de Molen, 2010). Providing clear feedback directly informs which norms are salient for an organization and

work team, and what an employee should do to follow these norms and be recognized as an ingroup member (cf. Smith & Louis, 2008).

Ashforth and his colleagues (2008) argue that this affirming feedback or *social validation* (cf. Festinger, 1950, 1954) may be the underlying mechanism of a “sense-giving” process through which co-workers guide newcomers’ understanding of their preferred organizational reality (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991, p. 422). If a co-worker indicates that a newcomer is doing the job correctly and appropriately; this feedback gives the newcomer a cue that their behavior is normative for their organization or their work team. Social validation provides an “identity echo” that reinforces desirable identity attributes (Ashforth et al., 2008, pp. 342-343). Unlike social support, social validation provides concrete and immediate information about the accuracy of the appropriateness of particular behaviors with regards to specific group norms and group standards.

In this way, sense-giving through social validation contributes to the development of identity (Ashforth et al., 2008; Pratt, 2001; Weick, 1995). This process is represented in our model (Figure 1), whereby social validation serves as an indirect cause of a reduction in turnover intentions, exerting its influence by increasing team- and organizational-level self-investment. Social validation enables a newcomer to evaluate the quality of his or her work relative to the expectations of their co-workers, and the extent to which his or her colleagues view their work, and therefore his or her candidacy for ingroup membership, positively. This social validation increases new employees’ confidence that they are doing their job correctly (cf. McGarty, Turner, Oakes, & Haslam, 1993) and are being accepted into the group by their peers. Therefore, social validation provides not only explicit feedback about the quality of their work that should enable individuals to learn their new role, but also implicit positive feedback about his or her acceptance as a new group member by existing group members. This perception of acceptance leads to a positive emotional attachment to the organization.

In turn, this positive emotional attachment, via increasing group-level self-investment, may increase the newcomer's loyalty to the organization (van Vugt & Hart, 2004).

 Insert Figure 1 about here

Importantly, social validation by work colleagues at the same level of seniority, for example by the local work team, is more likely to aid the development of team-level self-investment than self-investment at higher levels of abstraction. This is because team members represent the norms and values of their own specific group, rather than the more diffuse values and norms of the organization as a whole. We propose that the validation provided by different groups and leaders predicts the associated levels of group self-investment (similar to the “identity-matching” principle; Ullrich et al., 2007). In other words, newcomers may develop a sense of identification or self-investment at the specific level from which they received validation (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008). Validation by work team peers may increase their level of team-level self investment, but not organizational-level self-investment. Conversely, the team leader may be perceived as a team ingroup member, but also as a representative of the more superordinate organizational identity. Therefore, social validation from a team leader may increase organizational-level self-investment and also team-level self-investment. The above rationale led to our first hypothesis, with the caveat that the different levels of identification are related to each other, and therefore group self-investment fostered by validation at one level may “spill over” from one level to another.

Hypothesis 1: (a) Social validation by the team will be positively associated with team-level self-investment, and (b) social validation by the team leader will be positively associated with both organizational-level self-investment and team-level self-investment.

The role of fair treatment in increasing group-level self-investment. Fairness of treatment is conceptualized in the literature as a relational sub-component of procedural justice (Tyler & Blader, 2003). Akin to the way that social validation provides information about the content of the identity, fair treatment provides cues to the newcomer about the nature of the new group, and about the relationship between the organization and the employee. It conveys to individuals that they are valued and respected within their group (Restubog et al., 2008). Fairness is a cue to the newcomer that the organization is a desirable group with which to psychologically invest. This argument is supported by evidence that there is a positive relationship between procedural justice and organizational identification (Tyler & Blader, 2000; see also Walumbwa et al., 2009). On the other hand, unfair treatment leads individuals to distrust the organization and to dis-identify with the group (Restubog et al., 2008).

The group engagement model by Tyler and Blader (2003; Blader & Tyler, 2009) proposes that perceptions of procedural justice increase pride, respect, identification and organizational citizenship behaviors. As policies and procedures are set by the organization, perceptions about such policies and procedures would reflect on attachment to the organization rather than a different level of group self-investment. This led to our second and third hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2: Fairness of treatment within the organization will positively predict organizational-level self-investment.

Furthermore, in line with the group engagement model and the identification literature, our third hypothesis was as follows:

Hypothesis 3: Self-investment with the team and organization would (a) be negatively associated with turnover intentions, and (b) mediate the effect of social validation and fairness of treatment on turnover intentions.

Balancing Levels of Identification

As proposed in Figure 1, group-level self-investment is influenced by social-psychological cues such as validation and fair treatment. However, these antecedents are related to specific levels of group self-investment. We also need to consider how these antecedents predict specific levels of self-investment and the interplay between these levels on turnover intentions. Within an organization, individuals can identify with multiple groups, and group identities are often nested within each other (Riketta & Nienaber, 2007). Research reveals that outcomes (e.g., turnover) for each group are predicted by identification with the group that is the most relevant and salient (Ellemers & Rink, 2005; Ullrich et al., 2007). For example, an employee who perceives that he or she is treated fairly by his or her work team, but not by the organization as a whole, may identify only with the work team and not with the organization. This imbalance in favor of work team identification over organizational identification may mean that he or she is less committed to remain with the organization.

Yet these levels of identification are unlikely to be mutually exclusive: Identifying with interrelated groups may develop in the process of identifying with others, such that identification with smaller groups generalizes to larger groups (Amiot et al., 2007). For example, in an organization an employee may identify with their team, with their managers, and their department or division. The process of identifying with each of these nested subgroups may impact on identification with the superordinate category (i.e., the entire organization; Riketta & Nienaber, 2007). It is possible that identifying with multiple identities that are nested within each other, such as one's work team and organization, contributes to an employee's wellbeing and willingness to stay with the organization. Indeed, evidence in other domains suggests that identification with multiple groups (rather than just one) during times of transition can lead to more positive outcomes (e.g., Haslam, Holme,

Haslam, Iyer, Jetten, & Williams, 2008; Iyer, Jetten, Tsivrikos, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; see also Amiot et al., 2007; Tadmor & Tedlock, 2006).

We propose that a lack of balance between identities, or more specifically self-investment (e.g., becoming invested at one level but not with the other nested level) could be associated with greater turnover intentions. This may lead to the newcomer being unsure of the true nature and the global values of the organization or being ambiguous about how he or she feels about working for the organization. This lack of congruence (Sheldon & Niemec, 2006) between the local environment (i.e., the team) and superordinate environment (i.e., the organization) may be stressful and confronting, and increase the level of psychological risk to the newcomer (Harter, Bresnick, Bouchey, & Whitesell, 1997), and their intentions to leave.

While identity imbalance may increase turnover intentions through increasing cognitive dissonance (cf. Festinger, 1957), and/or identity conflict (e.g., Harter, 1999), the degree of imbalance *per se* may be less important in predicting turnover intentions than the direction or exact location of imbalance. Becoming invested more at the superordinate organizational level than at the team level could buffer against the impact of more proximal changes on turnover intentions (e.g., changes in the work team; Jetten, O'Brien, & Trindall, 2002). In the context of joining a new organization, it could be particularly important to develop self-investment with the organization as this is a more stable and continuous basis for identification compared to the work team. Both identifications are useful at their own levels: As a more proximal ingroup, the work team provides more opportunity for forming bonds between team members and concrete guidelines for work behavior while organizational identification provides broader goals and more continuity over time (see Sani, Bowe, & Herrera, 2008). In this way, organizational-level self-investment could be used as an identity “anchor” if changes take place at the work team level or if the employee is reassigned to another team.

In other words, investing more with a larger, superordinate group (e.g., the organization) and having one's levels of self-investment imbalanced in favor of this group, could buffer a lesser investment with a smaller, nested group (e.g., the work team). However, investing more with the work team rather than with the organization may not be sufficient to buffer the impact of dis-investment with the organization on turnover intentions. Therefore, we suggest that different "types" of identity imbalance are likely to have different effects on turnover intentions: The exact location of the imbalance may be more important than the extent to which there is imbalance *per se*. Accordingly, we hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 4(a): Greater group self-investment with the organization than with the work team would be negatively associated with turnover intentions, and (b) identity imbalance in favor of organizational-level self-investment over team-level self-investment would mediate the effect of social validation and fairness of treatment on turnover intentions.

Overview of Current Research

The present research investigates the relationships among the antecedent variables of fairness of treatment and social validation, the mediating role of group-level self-investment (as a subcomponent of social identification) at different levels of abstraction and of the imbalance between these levels, and the outcome variable of employee turnover intentions. To do this, we tested four structural equation models. The first model included perceptions of social validation by the team and fairness of treatment as predictors of team-level and organizational-level self-investment, and the mediating role of group self-investment at these levels on turnover intentions (Figure 2). The second model was identical, except that we replaced team social validation with team leader social validation (Figure 3). For the third and fourth models (Figures 4 and 5, respectively), team-level and organizational-level self-investment were replaced with a measure of the degree of imbalance between these levels of

group self-investment, and we investigated the mediating impact of this identity imbalance variable on turnover intentions.

The Organizational Context

This research examines the experiences of all new staff who joined a large public sector organization in a 6 month period. At the time of this research, the organization employed over 7,500 full-time, permanent staff, with an intake of around 500 new staff per annum recruited from outside the organization. The organization sponsored the research due to an employee-initiated turnover of almost 20 percent in permanent staff with less than 12 months tenure.

Socialization tactics. The organization used both local inductions and a centralized orientation program, in which all new permanent staff were expected to participate within 6 months of joining the organization. Local inductions were conducted in their workplace with a team leader. At orientation sessions, staff were informed about the organization's vision for the future. The organization therefore had a clearly defined program for introducing and orienting new staff to the organization. A goal of orientation was to give new employees the opportunity to clearly contextualize their role within the organization, and for the organization to promote its values and short and longer-term goals.

METHOD

Participants

Overall, 569 new staff members from the organization volunteered to participate in this research. Over a 12 month period, all staff who joined the organization were invited to complete the on-line questionnaire within the first 6 months of their permanent employment. Participants were recruited by asking for volunteers via email across the whole organization and through approaches at all corporate inductions. Data were collected across all departments of the organization and at all levels of seniority.

Initial analysis of the sample revealed that 88 participants reported their tenure as greater than 6 months at the time of completing the survey, and therefore their data were removed. A missing value analysis indicated that a further 10 participants' responses contained more than 5% missing data, and therefore were not included in analyses. The mean age of the remaining 471 participants was 35.11 years ($SD=11.76$), ranging from 17 to 68 years, including 200 females and 266 males (5 did not report their gender). Their average tenure was 2.56 months ($SD=1.68$) ranging from 0.25 to 6 months. The associations observed in the models did not vary as a function of the time the employees had been in the organization. The sample contained both non-office based ($N=193$) and office-based staff ($N=278$). All divisions of the organization were represented, and all participants had attended an induction.

Measures

Participants completed a structured online questionnaire containing standardized scales. The questionnaire measured perceptions of social validation by the team and team leader, fairness of treatment, identification with the team and organization, and turnover intentions. Details about these measures are now provided.

Social validation. A 6-item scale ($\alpha=.93$; adapted from Smith & Postmes, in press) measured the extent to which participants felt socially validated by their team members. These items were aggregated into two parcels. Parcel 1 (3 items, $\alpha=.87$) included the items, "My team makes me feel that my opinions about the correct way to do my job are valid"; "My team makes me feel that my beliefs about appropriate behavior at work are justified"; and "My team makes me feel that I conduct myself appropriately at work"; Parcel 2 (3 items, $\alpha=.87$) included the items, "My team makes me feel certain that my views on how to do my role are right"; "My team gives me confidence that I am doing my role well"; and "I feel that my opinions about work are shared by my team". An identical 6-item scale ($\alpha=.94$) was

adapted to measure perceived social validation by the person to whom the new staff member reported directly (e.g., team leader; this construct is hereafter referred to as *team leader social validation*; parcel 1, $\alpha=.89$; parcel 2, $\alpha=.92$). On all of the above and subsequent items, participants responded on a scale of 1 (“Strongly agree”) to 7 (Strongly disagree”).

Fairness of treatment. A 10-item sub-scale from Tyler and Blader’s (2003) four-component model of procedural justice ($\alpha=.95$) was used to measure fairness of treatment. These items were aggregated into three parcels. Items included: Parcel 1 (3 items, $\alpha=.87$): “The rules lead to fair treatment when decisions are being implemented”; “The rules require that I get an honest explanation for how decisions are made”; “My views are considered when rules are being applied”; Parcel 2 (3 items, $\alpha=.88$): “The rules ensure that my needs will be taken into account”; “The rules respect my rights as an employee”; “The rules respect my rights as a person”; and Parcel 3 (4 items, $\alpha=.92$): “I trust the organization to do what is best for me”; “The organization really cares about my well-being”; “My organization cares about my satisfaction”; “The organization follows through on the promises it makes”.

Identification: Team-level self-investment. A 10-item scale ($\alpha=.93$) adapted from Leach et al. (2008) measured the extent to which participants identified with their work team. Within this overall measure, three subscales measured distinct aspects of group-level self-investment. The scales were satisfaction (4 items, $\alpha=.92$): “I am glad to be in a group with my work team”; “I think my work team has a lot to be proud of”; “It is pleasant to be in a group with my work team”, and “Being in a group with my work team gives me a good feeling”; solidarity (3 items, $\alpha=.79$): “I feel a bond with my work team”; “I feel solidarity with my work team”; “I feel committed to my work team”; and centrality (3 items, $\alpha=.88$): “I often think about the fact that I am in a group with my work team”; “The fact that I am in a group with my work team is an important part of who I am”; and “Being in a group with my work team is an important part of my identity”.

Identification: Organizational-level self-investment. An equivalent 10-item scale to the team identification scale measured the extent to which participants identified with the organization (overall $\alpha=.93$). Items measured three aspects of self-investment with the organization, including satisfaction (4 items, $\alpha=.94$), solidarity (3 items, $\alpha=.85$); and centrality (3 items, $\alpha=.90$).

Identity imbalance. To assess the degree of imbalance (cf. Sheldon & Niemec, 2006) between the levels of identification, a difference score was computed by subtracting each team-level self-investment subscale from each equivalent organizational-level self-investment subscale. On the 7-point scale, the imbalance score could range from -6 (indicating maximum investment with the team over the organization) to +6 (maximum investment with the organization over the team). A zero score represented perfect balance between the two levels of self-investment. This measure of imbalance enabled us to ascertain the most prevalent direction of imbalance (or the presence of identity balance) and allowed to examine whether one direction of imbalance was more predictive of turnover intentions than the other.

Turnover intentions. A 3-item scale ($\alpha=.73$) was adapted from Bozeman and Perrewe (2001) to measure intentions to leave the organization: “I will probably look for a new job in the near future”, “It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this organization” and “There's not much to be gained by sticking with this organization indefinitely”.

Analytic Strategy

Parceling of items. When the number of items included in a full model is high, this can cause a sub-optimal variable to sample size ratio and less stable parameter estimates (Bagozzi & Heatherton, 1994). Using parcels enabled us to avoid under-identification of the model (Little, Cunningham, Shahar, & Widaman, 2002) and created more parsimonious

models with less various sources of systematic measurement or sampling error (Bandalos, 2002; Little et al., 2002).

Therefore, scale items were aggregated into two or more parcels for the validation and fairness constructs. Parcels were constructed using an internal consistency approach (Kishton & Widaman, 1994), whereby each parcel had a Cronbach's alpha score of $>.50$ and items within the parcel loaded onto only one factor. Using this approach, items were randomly assigned to parcels and each parcel passed a minimum standard of reliability and indication of unidimensionality, according to recommendations for parceling standards by Kishton and Widaman (1994). These distinct parcels were used as observed variables of the latent constructs in the models.

Preliminary analyses. Prior to the main analyses, the variables were examined for missing values, outliers and meeting the assumptions of multivariate analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Missing values (representing less than 3% of the sample on each measure) were estimated and replaced using an expectation-maximization method. Preliminary regression analyses were then conducted to assess the relative importance of the identification subscales in predicting turnover intentions. These preliminary analyses informed the choice of which subscales to include in the full structural equation models.

Main analyses. Model fit was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM). All model estimations were conducted using the Maximum Likelihood procedure in AMOS v.17.0 (Byrne, 2001). We assessed the model's goodness of fit by using the chi-square ratio, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI; Tanaka & Huba, 1989), the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), the absolute fit index (ABI; McDonald & Marsh, 1990), the normed fit index (NFI; Bentler & Bonett, 1980) the incremental fit index (IFI; Bollen, 1986), the standardized root mean residual (SRMR), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1993). Chi-square should ideally be non-significant, whereby the

observed data are not significantly different to the expected data based on the model specifications. The CFI gives an estimation of the fit of the hypothesized model relative to the null model (where the null model assumes zero population covariance among the observed variables; Kline, 2005). The GFI is analogous to R^2 in multiple regression, and calculates a weighted proportion of variance in the sample covariance accounted for by the estimated population covariance matrix (Tanaka & Huba, 1989). Fit indices greater than .95 are often taken as indicative of good-fitting models (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The SRMR is the average difference between the sample variances and covariances, and the estimated population variances and covariances; values below .08 are desirable (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The RMSEA estimates the lack of fit in a model compared to a saturated model; values of .06 or less indicate a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

To test for the mediating roles of organizational satisfaction, team satisfaction and identity imbalance in the associations between the antecedents and turnover intentions, two series of analyses were conducted for each model. First, using the unbiased estimates of mediation effects provided by SEM, we calculated the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals in AMOS 17.0 (for details of this bootstrapping procedure see Cheung & Lau, 2008). Evidence suggests this is a robust method of testing for mediation and enabled us to test the significance of the indirect effects (MacKinnon, Lockwood, Hoffmann, West, & Sheets, 2002; MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; MacKinnon, Warsi, & Dwyer, 1995). Second, we compared models that included the direct paths with models in which these direct paths were not included (Byrne, 2001). This enabled us to determine whether the indirect models or the direct models were a more appropriate fit for the data.

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Table 1 presents the correlations among the latent variables included in the SEM, as well as the means and standard deviations. A high zero-order correlation between validation by the team and team leader, $r(471) = .74, p < .001$, suggested that these variables may be multicollinear. Collinearity diagnostics indicated that the condition index of one dimension was 16.57, and this dimension contributed strongly to the variance of both team and team leader validation (.97 and .69, respectively; see Belsely, Kuh, & Welsch, 1980). In order to avoid statistical instability in the parameter estimates, team and team leader levels of validation were investigated in separate models in subsequent SEM analyses¹.

 Insert Table 1 about here

Regression of identification subcomponents on turnover intentions. Regression analyses investigated the impact of the subcomponents of team-level and organizational-level self-investment on turnover intentions. As we were interested in testing how each level of self-investment predicts turnover intentions, the team-level and organizational-level self-investment subscales were entered in Step 1 and Step 2 of the regression analysis, respectively. This enabled us to ascertain the proportion of the variance in turnover intentions explained by each level of self-investment. Table 2 displays the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), standard error, the standardized regression coefficients (β), R^2 , adjusted R^2 and change in R^2 .

 Insert Table 2 about here

In Step 1, the three subcomponents of team-level self-investment contributed 0.06% (0.05% adjusted) in the variability in turnover intentions. Team satisfaction was the only

significant predictor of turnover intentions, $\beta = -.25$, $p = .001$, as neither team centrality, $\beta = .08$, $p = .14$, nor team solidarity, $\beta = -.03$, $p = .68$, were associated significantly with turnover intentions. At Step 2, the three subcomponents of organizational-level self-investment explained an additional 23% of the variance in turnover intentions, $\Delta R^2 = .23$, $p < .001$. Although the bivariate correlations between the subcomponents of organizational-level self-investment and turnover intentions were statistically different from zero, neither organizational solidarity, $\beta = -.003$, $p = .97$, nor organizational centrality, $\beta = .04$, $p = .56$, contributed significantly to the regression analysis. The relationship between organizational-level self-investment and turnover intentions was driven by the satisfaction sub-component, which had a significant effect, $\beta = -.55$, $p < .001$. Accordingly, only the team-level and organizational-level satisfaction subcomponents of identification were included in the SEM analyses.

Main Analyses

Tests of the hypothesized theoretical model. To investigate the factors associated with increased turnover intentions, the theoretical model presented in Figure 1 was tested over four SEMs using AMOS.17.0. Team and team leader social validation were entered into separate models in order to avoid statistical instability caused by their multicollinearity.

In order to test Hypotheses 1-3, we analyzed a model that contained team social validation and both levels of group satisfaction (Model 1; Figure 2)². Fit indices for this model were relatively good ($\chi^2(97) = 228.55$, $p < .001$, GFI = .94, NFI = .96, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, RMSEA = .05, SRMA = .05). The equivalent model that included team leader social validation instead of team validation (Model 2; Figure 3) had a slightly better fit ($\chi^2(97) = 210.10$, $p < .001$, GFI = .95, NFI = .96, CFI = .98, IFI = .98, RMSEA = .05, SRMA = .05). Exchanging team validation for team leader validation represented a significant improvement in model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 17.34$, $p < .01$.

Insert Figures 2 and 3 about here

To test Hypothesis 4, Model 3 (Figure 4) investigated the effect of team social validation and fairness on identity imbalance, and the mediating affect of identity imbalance on turnover intentions.³ This model had satisfactory fit ($\chi^2(24)=98.26$, $p<.001$, GFI=.96, NFI=.96, CFI=.97, IFI=.97, RMSEA=.08, SRMA=.11). A fourth model (Figure 5) replaced team social validation with team leader social validation. This model also fit the data well ($\chi^2(24)=96.26$, $p<.001$, GFI=.96, NFI=.96, CFI=.97, IFI=.97, RMSEA=.08, SRMA=.12), representing a non-significant increase in fit when team leader validation was included rather than team validation, $\Delta\chi^2(1)=2.00$, $p=.20$.

Insert Figures 4 and 5 about here

Tests of indirect effects. As the path between organizational satisfaction and turnover intentions was significant in Models 1 and 2, it appeared that organizational satisfaction may mediate the association between social validation and fairness and turnover intentions. Therefore, for each indirect model we calculated the bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals in AMOS 17.0 (Table 3) and compared the direct and indirect models to determine which was the most appropriate for the data.

Results indicated that both team and team leader validation, and fairness of treatment, had a significant negative indirect effect on turnover intentions in these models. Together, these results confirm the mediating role of organizational satisfaction in the association between social validation and turnover intentions, and between fairness and turnover intentions. This procedure was also followed to test the indirect effect of validation and

fairness on turnover intentions through identity imbalance (Models 3 and 4). Results suggested that identity imbalance had significant mediating effect on turnover intentions (Table 3).

 Insert Table 3 about here

Next, we compared models that included the direct paths with models in which these direct paths were not included (Byrne, 2001). We compared Model 1 that included the direct links between fairness and turnover intentions, and between team validation and turnover intentions ($\chi^2(95)=228.20$, $p<.001$, GFI=.94, NFI=.96, CFI=.98, IFI=.98, RMSEA=.06, SRMA=.05) to Model 1 without these two direct links. The difference in fit between these models was not significant $\Delta\chi^2(1)=0.35$, $p>.05$. Model 2 was then tested with the direct links included ($\chi^2(95)=210.10$, $p<.001$, GFI=.95, NFI=.96, CFI=.98, IFI=.98, RMSEA=.05, SRMA=.05). Again, the difference in fit between the models with and without the direct links was not significant $\Delta\chi^2(1)=0.001$, $p>.05$. Therefore, the addition of these two direct links did not improve the fit of either Model 1 or 2, and the indirect paths remained significant to $p=.001$. As the direct paths in both models were non-significant, and the indirect models were more parsimonious and fit the data equally well, the direct paths were not included in the final models.

Addition of the direct paths in Model 3 yielded adequate fit indices ($\chi^2(22)=45.98$, $p<.001$, GFI=.98, NFI=.98, CFI=.99, IFI=.99, RMSEA=.05, SRMA=.03) and significantly improved the fit of the model according to the chi-square index $\Delta\chi^2(2)=28.81$, $p<.001$ (which would be expected upon the addition of two parameters). With the inclusion of these direct paths the association between identity imbalance and turnover intentions remained highly significant (increasing from $\beta=-0.31$, $p=.001$ to $\beta=-0.38$, $p<.001$). This suggests that in

addition to any direct effect that team validation had on turnover intentions, there was also a significant indirect effect through identity imbalance. A similar result was achieved for Model 4 ($\Delta\chi^2(2)=51.51, p<.001$; $\chi^2(22)=45.46, p<.001$, GFI=.98, NFI=.98, CFI=.99, IFI=.99, RMSEA=.05, SRMA=.05). Upon inclusion of the direct paths in Model 4, the path between identity imbalance and turnover intentions was modified by only 0.01 (from $\beta=-0.31$ to $\beta=-0.30, p<.001$). This minimal change in the coefficients in Models 3 and 4 suggests that identity imbalance mediated the relationship between the predictor variables and turnover intentions.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to investigate factors that predicted turnover intentions in people who are new to an organization. We argued that the social validation that newcomers receive from their team and team leader, situated within a fair and respectful organizational context, would be positively associated with their extent to which they self-invest (identify) with their team and organization. We argued that in turn, this group-level self-investment would negatively predict newcomers' intentions of resigning from the organization. Furthermore, we investigated the importance of the parallel influence of different levels of self-investment and the interplay between these levels. We proposed that investing at one nested level (the work team), but not at the superordinate level (the organization) could increase the individuals' intentions to leave.

In line with Hypothesis 1, team leader validation positively predicted both team satisfaction and organizational satisfaction. It appears team leaders can simultaneously be a representative of the local team and of the organization, and therefore validation from team leaders can help newcomers invest at both levels. Interestingly, validation from the team also positively predicted satisfaction at both levels and therefore, validation from both the team and the team leader were also both significantly and negatively associated with identity

imbalance. As others have found (Tyler & Blader, 2000; Walumbwa et al., 2009), in support of Hypothesis 2 fairness of treatment also significantly and positively predicted organizational satisfaction (but not team satisfaction) and therefore, it predicted an imbalance between the identities in favor of organizational-level self-investment.

Overall, the above findings suggest that the combination of social cues newcomers receive through perceptions of social validation and fair treatment may contribute to their self-investment with the team and organization. This implies that positive and validating feedback from co-workers and the demonstration of respect and fair treatment in the workplace are important aspects of the socialization process.

We found partial support for Hypothesis 3: satisfaction (as a subcomponent of identification) with the organization, but not the team, was negatively associated with turnover intentions. Furthermore, organizational satisfaction fully mediated the relationships between validation and turnover intentions and between fairness of treatment and turnover intentions. In turn, employee levels of organizational satisfaction negatively predicted their intentions to leave the organization. This finding suggests that validation and fairness may reduce turnover intentions by promoting satisfaction with being a member of the organization. These social-psychological factors are negatively associated with turnover intentions through being positively associated with organizational satisfaction during this early phase of newcomer socialization. This result highlights the importance of organizational identity in providing the psychological glue which increases individuals' commitment to their organization⁴ (cf. van Vugt & Hart, 2004).

In accordance with Hypothesis 4, an imbalance between levels of group self-investment in favor of the organizational level was positively associated with intentions to stay in the organization. Identity imbalance in this direction predicted decreased turnover intentions, and also mediated the effect of validation and fairness on turnover intentions. We

suggest that feeling invested more with the organization as a whole than with the team may provide a more general vision of the work environment as well as a psychological safety-net against the impact of more proximal changes on turnover intentions (e.g., Jetten et al., 2002). Previous research has shown the strong effect of organizational attachment on turnover (Riketta & van Dick, 2005). This result suggests that the direction of imbalance between the levels of group self-investment could be more important than the existence of imbalance *per se*.

Interestingly, in the present study we found that only the satisfaction subcomponent of group-level self-investment was significantly associated with turnover intentions. This suggests that the positive emotional satisfaction experienced by our participants was more important in predicting turnover intentions in the newcomer context than the “colder” more cognitive dimensions of self-investment. This is congruent with previous authors’ suggestions that affect may be of primary importance in determining whether a new group member remains with or leaves their group (Cameron, 2004; Leach et al., 2008).

Implications

Our research provides evidence for the factors which aid the development of newcomers’ self-investment with an organization at different levels, and how this shapes their turnover intentions. The message from this work is that the development of the self-investment subcomponent of identification can occur via proximal social cues for both small local and larger superordinate groups. Our results highlight the implications of the newcomer receiving feedback about the validity of their workplace behavior from existing group members and their leader.

Previously, there was an absence of research on the effect of the subcomponents of identification on workplace turnover intentions. We have provided evidence that group-level satisfaction is particularly relevant to predicting turnover intentions in this newcomer context

relative to the other subcomponents. There was also scarce empirical research that investigated the impact of different levels of identification at work on turnover intentions. We have evidence of the relative impact of these levels, with the organizational level being the predominant level at which turnover intentions can be predicted. Finally, we provide the novel finding that an imbalance in these levels in favor of the organization may also contribute towards decreased turnover intentions. To our knowledge, this is the first time identity imbalance has been empirically explored.

The importance and relative novelty of the identity imbalance concept is evident in the fact that there is an emerging literature pointing to the significance of the multiplicity of identities, but this literature so far does not explicitly conceptualize or analyze identity imbalance, nor does it account for the impact of these diverse identities on turnover intentions (e.g., Bartels et al., 2010; Johnson, Morgeson, Ilgen, Meyer, & Lloyd, 2006). In future research, this concept should be further refined and operationalized before investigating how this variable operates at various stages in the socialization process and on various outcomes.

Our model and hypothesis testing brings together prior theorizing on the development of identification and its significance for organizational outcomes (e.g., Amiot et al., 2007; Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Haslam et al., 2003; Riketta & van Dick, 2005; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; van Vugt & Hart, 2004). We synthesize research on procedural justice (e.g., Tyler & Blader, 2000), multiple levels and dimensions of identity (e.g., van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000; Ellemers et al., 1999), social validation (e.g., Ashforth & Saks, 1996) and identity-affirmation by leaders (Haslam & Platow, 2001; Haslam, Reicher & Platow, 2010). In investigating these variables when newcomers are at the highest period of risk in terms of potential turnover, this research is significant for uncovering the pattern of both significant and null effects described above. We have promoted exploration of new avenues through

which managers might explore how might make both emotional and cognitive connections with new staff that encourage them to stay.

Future directions. The cross-sectional nature of the study places constraints upon interpretation of the present data. The next stage in this research program would be to test longitudinally whether social validation and fair treatment over time could instigate long-term integration of the new work identity and an associated robust commitment to stay in the organization. As a first step, it was preferable to test these links cross-sectionally, with a specific and large sample of employees (i.e., at the beginning of the socialization process). Before such a logistically complex long-term project could take place however, it was first necessary to demonstrate the power of social validation and fair treatment in the immediate period after joining a new organization, as we have done here.

The current study is a first step towards a development model where subcomponents of identification become relatively more or less important to group members over time. This conceptual framework builds upon the current theorizing of Amiot and others (Amiot et al., 2007). Significantly, we need more research that examines the later stages proposed in these socialization models (e.g., Ashforth et al., 2008; for a review, see Bauer et al., 2007).

Practical implications for organizations. Employee turnover represents a huge financial and social loss to organizations (Kacmar et al., 2006). If turnover intentions are in part related to identity issues, efforts to develop the workplace identification of newcomers should reduce turnover intentions. Our findings highlight the utility of focusing upon the day-to-day interactions of new employees with their existing teams and team leaders in building this identification.

Yet, work teams and the team leader do not often play significant roles in the formal socialization process, as socialization programs are often centralized (e.g., Allen, 2006; Ashforth & Saks, 1996; Morrison, 1993). Organizations should consider implementing a

regular contact scheme through which newcomers have opportunities for identity-affirming social validation by their work team and team leader. This strategy would encourage social validation of new staff members and provide them with the vital cues that they are normative and accepted ingroup members (Ashforth et al., 2008; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991; Festinger, 1950, 1954). Organizations should ensure that the treatment of staff is fair and procedures are transparent. Making fair treatment an explicit, core value of the organization makes newcomers feel respected and positive towards the organization as a whole (Restubog et al., 2008; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Walumbwa et al., 2009). Team leaders and managers should be encouraged to reinforce those fair treatment norms within their work teams.

Conclusion

This research tested two fundamental psychological factors that help to psychologically attach a newcomer to an organization. Obviously, our focus on social validation and fairness does not downplay the importance of other factors in the development of organizational identity, such as socialization tactics, role mastery and relative organizational distinctiveness, which all contribute uniquely to the newcomers' "life space" (Lewin, 1936). Rather, this program of research will continue to explore the subcomponents of identification that influence individuals in their first few months of organizational membership, and that can shape their decisions to stay or leave. In doing so, we hope to contribute not only to an improved theoretical account of the processes of identity integration and newcomer socialization, but also to provide insights into practical solutions that employers can use to ease the transition phase for both the organization and their employees.

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Notes

¹ In view of the high intercorrelation between the team validation and team leader validation scales, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to empirically ascertain whether these can be considered separate variables or should be treated as a single factor in further modeling. The CFA confirmed a significant improvement in model fit when the constructs were treated as separate scales, measuring team and team leader validation respectively; rather than as a single construct, $\Delta\chi^2(2)=667.77, p<.001$. A hierarchical regression analysis predicting turnover intentions, including team validation at Step 1 and team leader validation at Step 2, suggested that both team validation ($\Delta R^2=.03, F(1,444)=15.10, p<.001$) and team leader validation ($\Delta R^2=.04, F(1, 443)=20.56, p<.001$) explained a significant amount of unique variance in turnover intentions.

² To address the issue of directionality between variables, we tested two alternative reverse-causation models in which turnover intentions predicted perceptions of fair treatment and team validation or team leader validation, respectively. The reverse-causation models fitted the data significantly less well than did the models proposed in the current paper (the difference between models being $\Delta\chi^2(1)=156.36, p<.001$ and $\Delta\chi^2(1)=179.86, p<.001$ respectively, with the original models providing the better fit than the reverse-causation models). We have therefore retained the original models.

³ Additional models were tested to assess whether the relationships in Models 3 and 4 remained significant when the variables measuring organizational-level and team-level satisfaction were also included in the models alongside the identity imbalance variable. These models had satisfactory fit (Model 3's fit becoming $\chi^2(110)=336.62, p<.001$; GFI=.92, NFI=.95, CFI=.96, IFI=.96, RMSEA=.07, SRMA=.06 upon inclusion of the satisfaction scales; and Model 4's fit becoming $\chi^2(110)=319.51, p<.001$; GFI=.93, NFI=.95, CFI=.96, IFI=.97, RMSEA=.06, SRMA=.06). The paths between social validation and identity

imbalance and between fairness of treatment and identity imbalance remained significant in both models. However, as the identity imbalance and satisfaction variables partly contain the same scale items, they are likely to be multicollinear and this may cause statistical instability in the parameter estimates if included in the same models. Therefore, we report them in separate models.

⁴This does not mean to imply that the team level of identification is unimportant for newcomers. Team identification may predict other organizational or team outcomes. Indeed, previous research has indicated that in certain contexts where the team is highly salient, work team identification predicts turnover intentions (Moreland & Levine, 2001; van Knippenberg and van Shie, 2000). Team identification is also highly related to the motivation to follow team goals (van Dick et al., 2009; Worchel et al., 1998), creative performance (Hirst, van Dick & van Knippenberg, 2009) and effective leadership (Morgeson, DeRue & Karam, 2010).

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlations between Variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Team social validation	5.52	1.07	(.93)	.74**	.37**	.67**	.67**	.48**	.38**	.42**	.28**	-	-
												.29**	.19**
2. Team leader social validation	5.45	1.23		(.94)	.48**	.53**	.49**	.37**	.51**	.51**	.34**	.06	-
													.28**
3. Fairness of treatment	4.63	0.86			(.95)	.31**	.28**	.29**	.48**	.49**	.43**	.14**	-
													.25**
4. Team-level satisfaction	5.84	1.04				(.92)	.78**	.55**	.41**	.38**	.24**	-	-
												.57**	.23**
5. Team-level solidarity	5.57	1.06					(.79)	.52**	.30**	.37**	.24**	-	-
												.46**	.18**
6. Team-level centrality	4.66	1.40						(.88)	.34**	.40**	.57**	-	-.07
												.22**	
7. Organizational-level	6.09	1.01							(.94)	.62**	.65**	.51**	-

	satisfaction								.51**
8.	Organizational-level	5.46	1.18		(.85)	.62**	.33**	-	
	solidarity								.38**
9.	Organizational-level	5.08	1.47			(.90)	.22**	-	
	centrality								.26**
10.	Identity imbalance	0.25	1.12					-	
									.25**
11.	Turnover intentions	2.62	1.46					(.73)	

** $p < .01$

Cronbach's alphas are in parentheses.

TABLE 2
Hierarchical Regression for Team and Organizational Identification Self-investment
Subcomponents Predicting Turnover Intentions

Step and predictor variable	B	SEB	β	R^2	R^2_{adj}	ΔR^2
Step 1				.06**	.05	
Team satisfaction	-0.34	0.11	-0.25**			
Team solidarity	-0.04	0.10	-0.03			
Team centrality	0.09	0.06	0.08			
Step 2				.29**	.28	.23**
Organizational satisfaction	-0.80	0.10	-0.55**			
Organizational solidarity	-0.003	0.08	-0.003			
Organizational centrality	0.04	0.06	0.04			

** $p < .01$

TABLE 3
Standardized Coefficients for Indirect Effects of Predictor Variables on Turnover Intentions

Indirect Effect	Turnover Intentions	95% Lower bias-corrected confidence interval	95% Upper bias-corrected confidence interval
Model 1			
Team social validation	-0.17**	-0.25	-0.08
Fairness of treatment	-0.25**	-0.30	-0.18
Model 2			
Team leader social validation	-0.25**	-0.32	-0.17
Fairness of treatment	-0.19**	-0.25	-0.13
Model 3			
Team social validation	0.13*	0.08	0.18
Fairness of treatment	-0.10*	-0.14	-0.06
Model 4			
Team leader social validation	0.05*	0.01	0.09
Fairness of treatment	-0.07*	-0.11	-0.03

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Number of samples=1000.

FIGURE 1
Hypothesized Theoretical Model

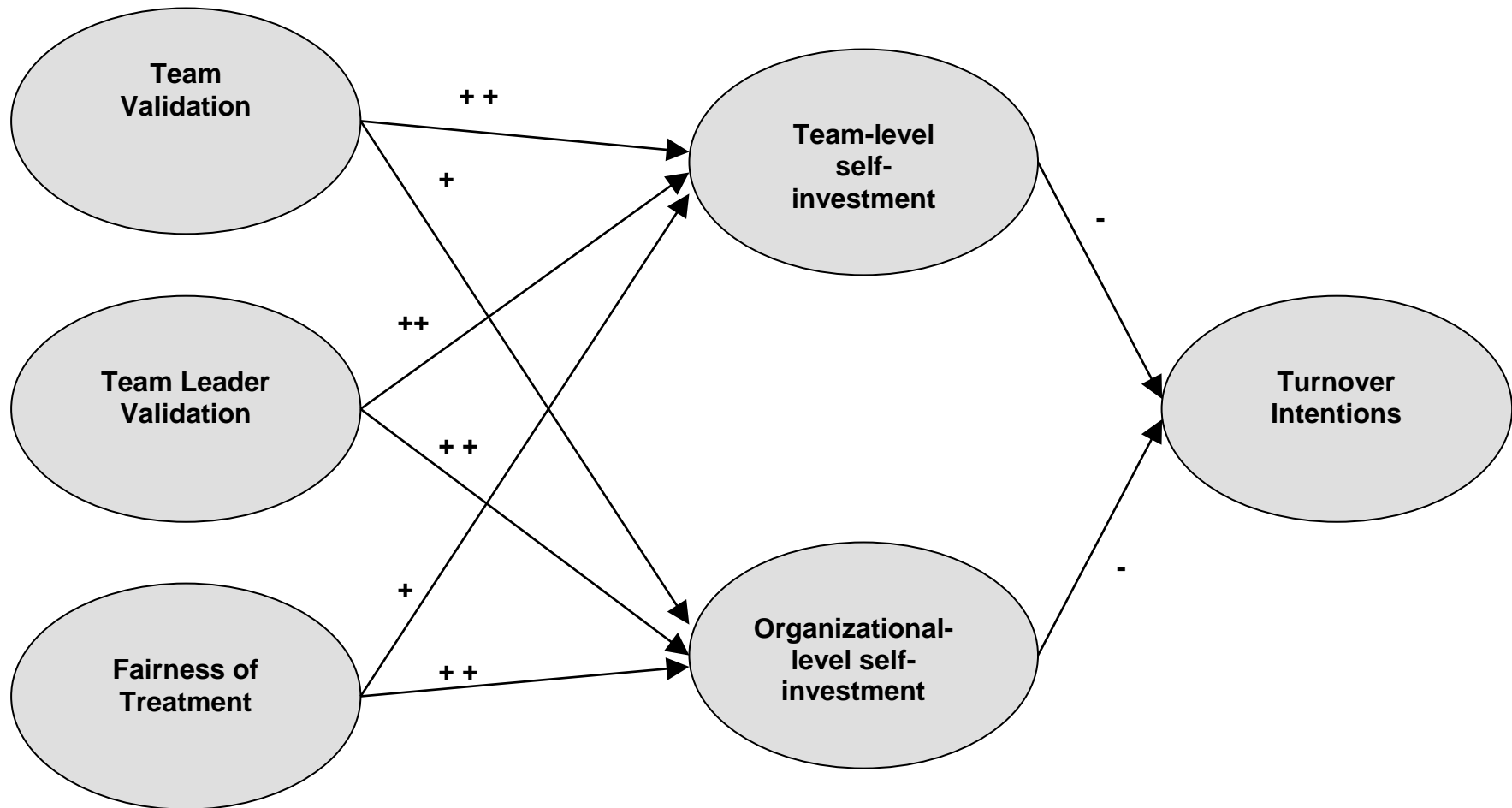


FIGURE 2

Structural Relationships in the Indirect Effects Model with Team Validation, Model 1

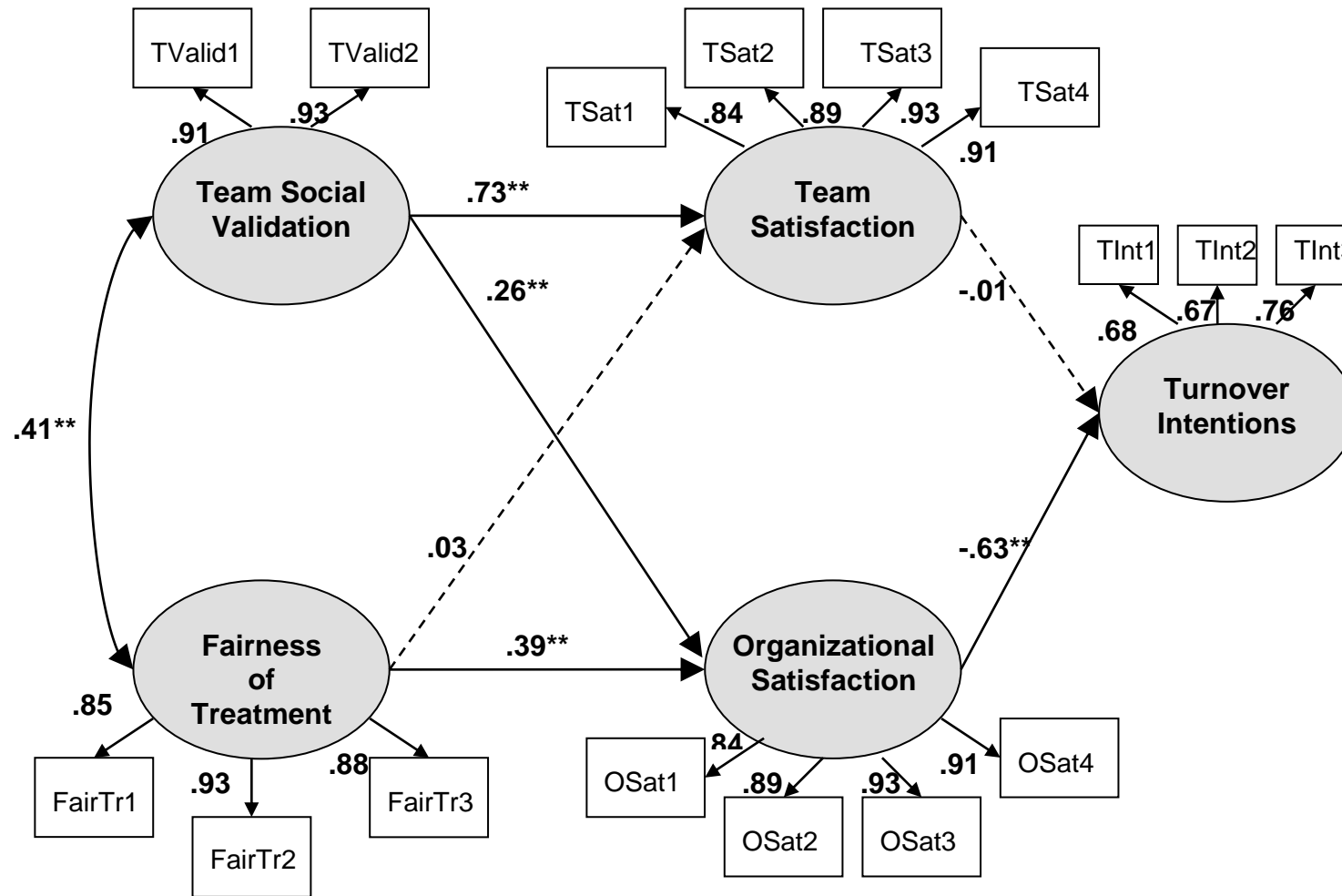
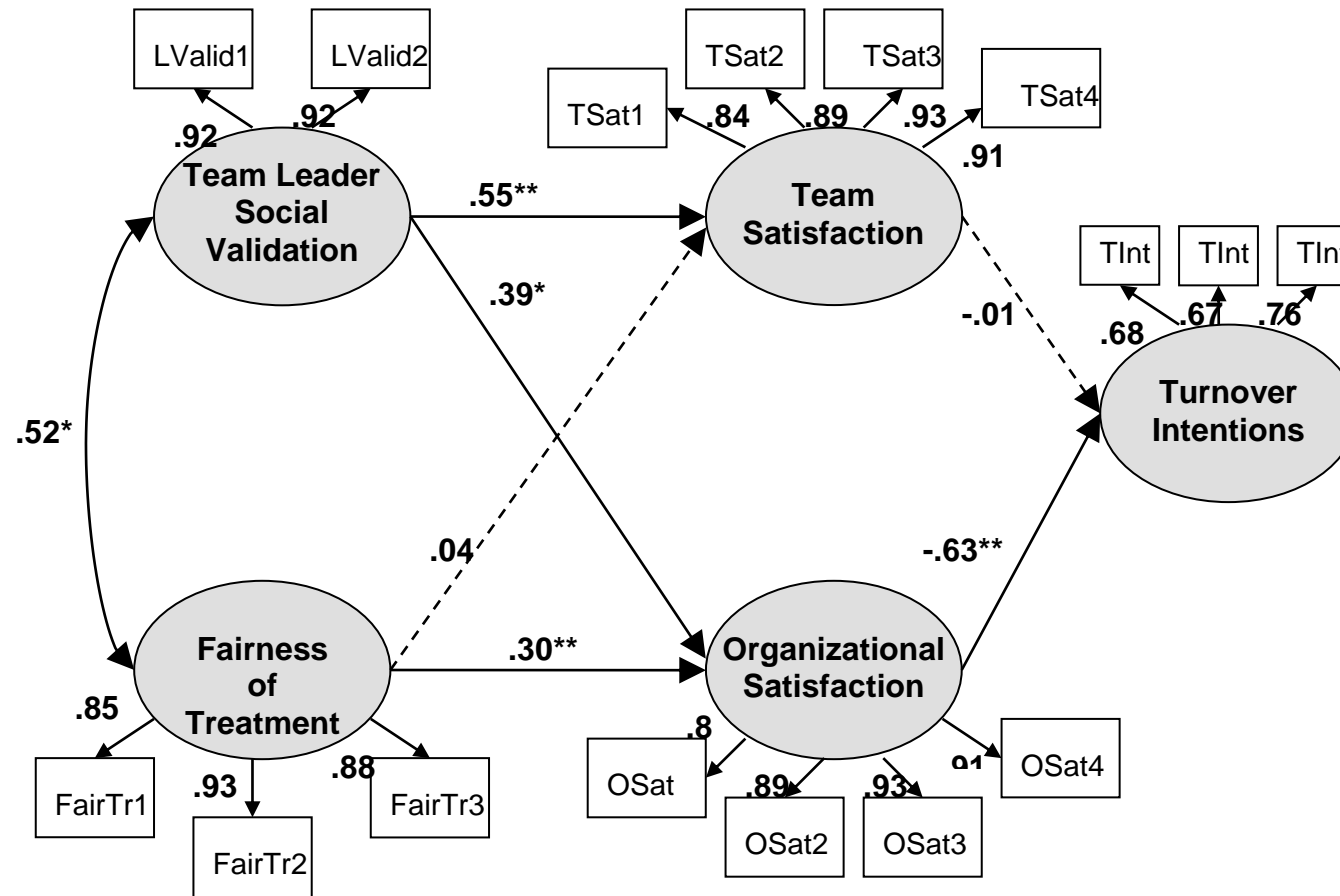
** $p < .001$

FIGURE 3

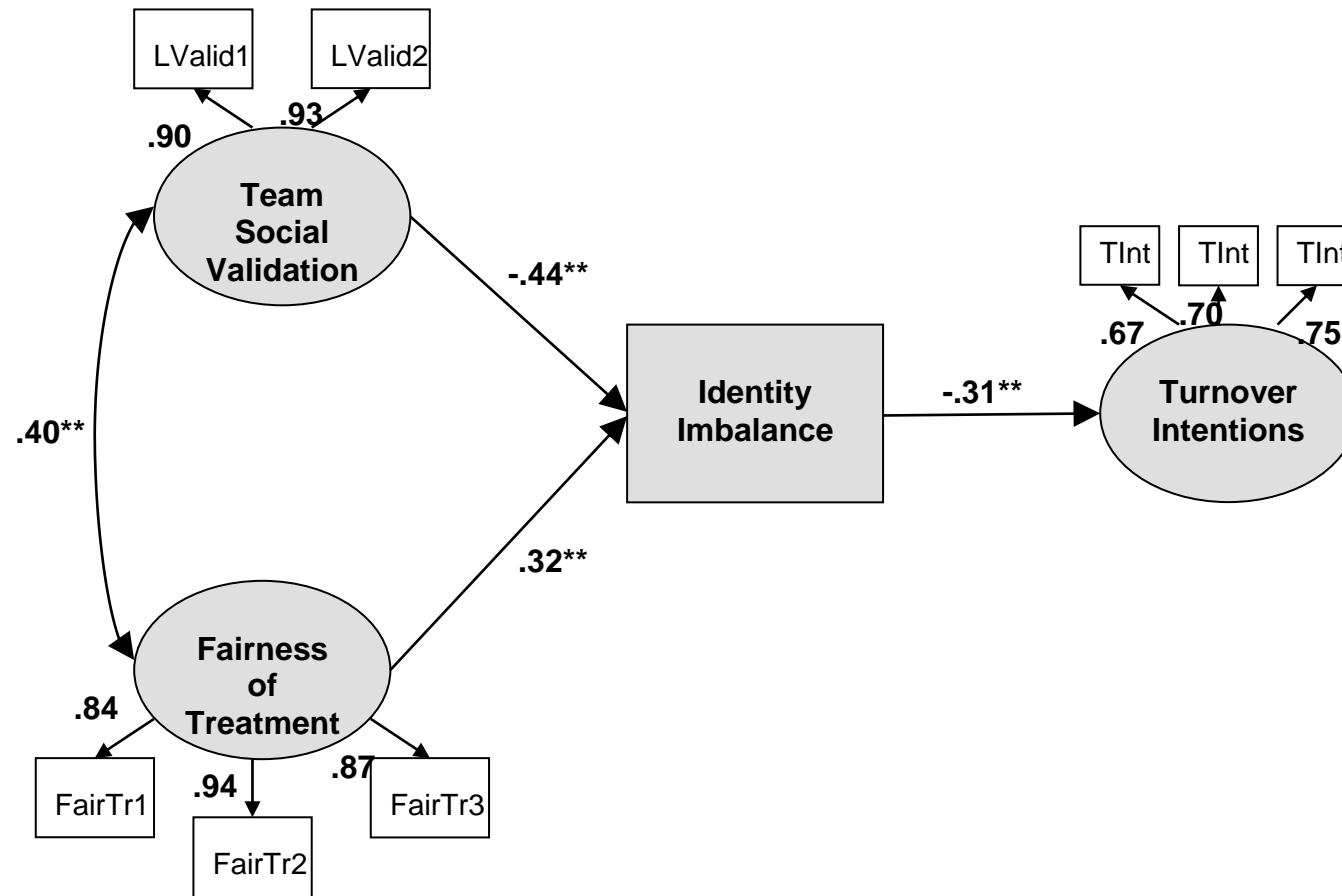
Structural Relationships in the Indirect Effects Model with Team Leader Validation, Model 2



** $p < .001$

FIGURE 4

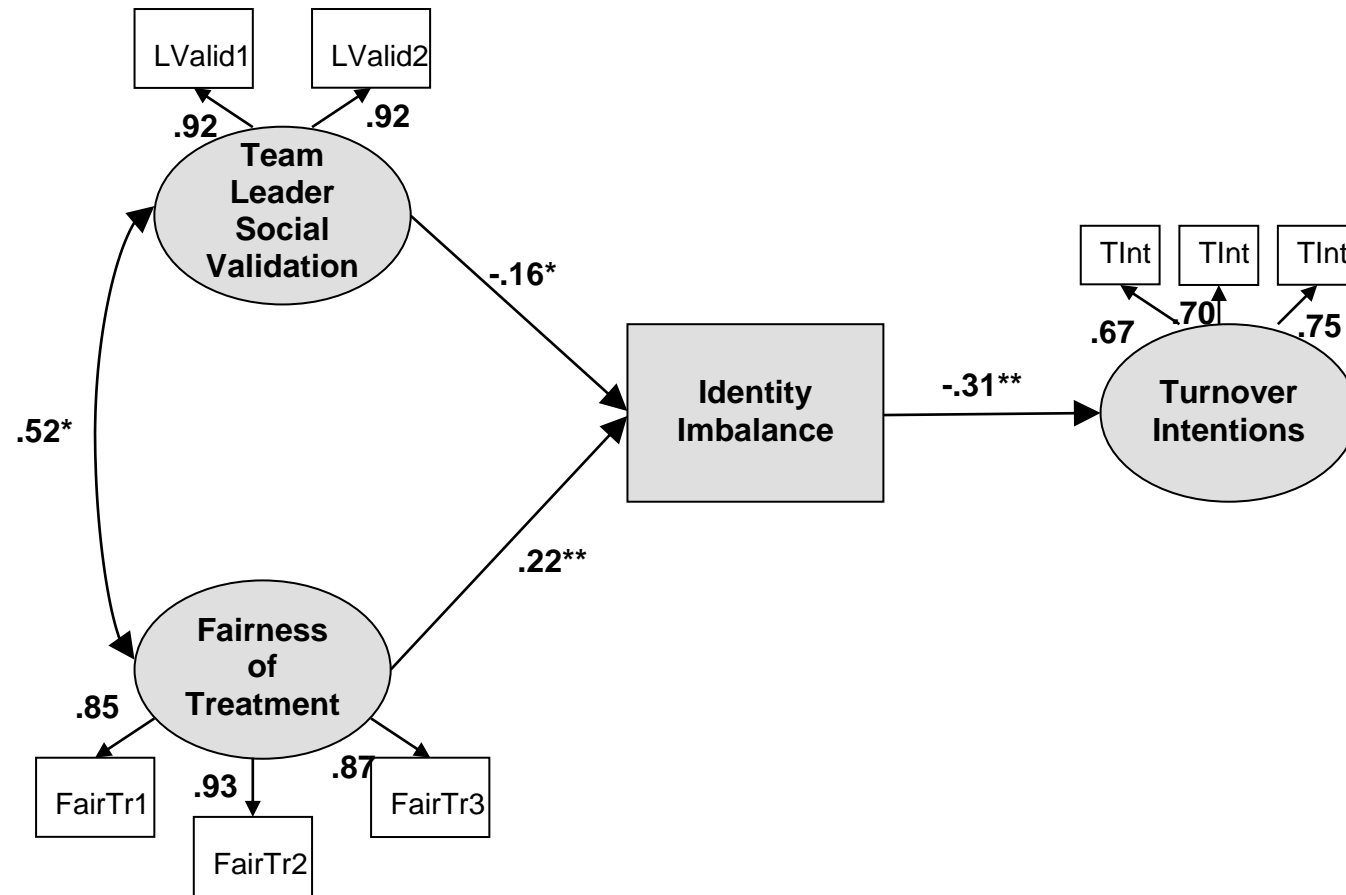
Structural Relationships in the Indirect Effects Model Predicting Turnover intentions through Identity Imbalance, Model 3



**** $p < .001$**

FIGURE 5

Structural Relationships in the Indirect Effects Model Predicting Turnover intentions through Identity Imbalance, Model 4



* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$